

R E V I E W S

THEOLOGY AND WORSHIP

A LIFE OF OUR LORD. By Vincent McNabb, O.P. (Sheed and Ward; 6s.)

Many of the many readers of Fr. Vincent's numerous and varied publications will find this latest volume to be the most typical of its author's acute penetration into the sources of things spiritual and the most illuminative and practically helpful product of a long lifetime spent wholly in the apostolate of divine truth. It is the outcome of half a century's meditation and study, assisted by a rare quality of vision and an unwearying enthusiasm, on what Fr. Vincent himself calls 'the romance of Redemption,' and it is to be judged from that point of view.

It is not, nor does the author intend it to be, an addition to biblical scholarship; yet it is the direct result, at least in part, of a close acquaintance with the work of the great exegetes, those 'patient coral-builders of biblical exegesis . . . without whose . . . selfless love of the Book,' as the author himself puts it, 'few pages of this life could have been written.' Neither is it a mere narrative of the events of Our Lord's life. Few masters are more vividly aware than this Dominican Master of Theology that the historical facts of that life, vitally important as they are in themselves, are not the only facts nor the most vitally important ones in the supreme fact of the Incarnation. They have a mystical, supernatural significance which causes these historical incidents to stand as the actual link binding each individual man to God in the union of divine love; they have a sacramental quality, being the outward signs of a supernatural reality and causing what they signify. Hence the urgent necessity that all men should know not only the facts of Our Lord's life, but also the inward meaning of those facts; and hence, too, the peculiar value of the volume under review. That is not to say that Fr. Vincent attempts to cover the whole ground of this significance; that has been done, and could only be done, by a St. Thomas Aquinas in a *Summa Theologica*. Just as he has absorbed the scholarly results of biblical exegetes properly so-called, so has the author absorbed even more deeply and completely the teaching of the great theological exegete, St. Thomas; so that, fortified and inspired by such authority and safeguarded by the decisions of the Church, he has been able to look anew at the life of Our Lord and find new points of significance, often in apparently inconsequential details. It is especially these new flashes of vision occurring on almost

every page, that gives this new *Life of Our Lord* a special value and causes it to be both an attractive and a practical help towards a more vivid appreciation of the supreme manifestation of divine Truth and Love.

HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

A COMPANION TO THE SUMMA. Vol. II. The Pursuit of Happiness. By Walter Farrell, O.P., S.T.L., S.T.D. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

Fr. Walter Farrell promises to give us in four volumes a guide book to the *Summa*. He calls it a *Companion to the Summa*, and a very good companion it will be, if we may judge from this, the first volume to appear. The work owes its origin, as the author explains in the preface, to a series of lectures given in New York under the auspices of the Catholic Thought Association, and we are most grateful to Fr. Farrell for his decision to give those lectures permanent record and so make them accessible to the general reading public.

The present volume covers the whole of the *1aIIæ* and is fittingly called 'The Pursuit of Happiness.' The author's method is to take a few questions of the *Summa* at a time, to summarise their content schematically and then to give in the course of fifteen or twenty pages the substance of the doctrine contained in them. He thus follows closely the order of the *Summa* and omits nothing of importance to the understanding of the main lines of St. Thomas's thought. Fr. Farrell has an enviable power of compressing without distorting, of illustrating by example without distracting, of modernising the language without falsifying the concept, whilst at times there appears a rhetorical genius which suggests that the original lectures must indeed have been worth hearing. An 'Analysis of Modern Ethical Opinion' (the word is aptly chosen) forms the subject of a final chapter, which, if we may venture a small criticism, is rather more exclusively concerned with American opinion than its title indicates.

Theological students, whether studying directly from the *Summa* or using a modern text-book, will find this volume invaluable as a concise, orderly and balanced summary of the general part of St. Thomas's Moral Theology. We recommend it none the less heartily to the layman as a manual of General Ethics and as an introduction to the Moral Doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. We look forward with pleasure to the other volumes of the series.

ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE, O.P.